

My name is Joe Dinda. I have resided (and paid taxes) in Michigan since 1990, when I started working as an Engineer at General Motors. I enjoyed being an automotive engineer, but I never felt like this career was my destiny.

After 10 years in the Auto Industry, I got fed up with the bureaucracy and regular cycle of downturns and/or strikes and moved into the Computer Consulting industry. I enjoy Computer Consulting also, but I've never felt like it was my destiny, either.

I've always had Film and TV production in my mind as the thing I'd most like to do. But, as with many things in my life, I'd dabbled with it, but hadn't gone "all the way" with it. That is, until the Michigan Film Incentives brought the industry into my back yard. For once, I am in the right place at the right time, and my procrastination has paid off. Michigan is currently home to the most enticing Film Incentives around. Production companies have been flocking here to take advantage of these incentives. With such conditions in place, how could I NOT take advantage of them?

Truly excited about living in Michigan for the first time ever, I plunked down my money to learn what it takes to work in the industry and try and get my foot in the door. I found training classes called "FIT -- Film Industry Training," that gives students training and gets them on film sets with the goal of obtaining paid employment.

After several internships with productions that came to Michigan, I landed a paying job on the movie, "Little Murder." I had a wonderful experience working on this production, and believed that the industry (and myself) had a rosy future in Michigan.

Unfortunately, though, almost immediately after these incentives were passed, Michigan started debate over tampering with the incentives. And that is why I am here today. I believe that it is premature for the state of Michigan to even mention reducing the Film Incentives. Productions have already been scared away by this talk, and more will avoid Michigan before Michigan's new studios have a chance to get up and running. Besides losing a new source of brand-new jobs (and taxes), our State Government will lose the faith of the people who have spent time and money learning about and investing in this new industry, with the backing of the Film Incentives.

Some falsely believe that only unemployed people will be interested in Film jobs. I am an example of a person who would still like to make the move to the Film Industry, even though I already hold an in-demand, high-paying job. People like me will leave our old positions open for a currently-unemployed worker to fill. This job shift would take extra people off of unemployment, and lead to increased income tax revenue. In short, 2 people could be employed for each new film job that comes into Michigan!

The Film Industry has already shown that they are able to come here and give people jobs. I wonder if the same can be said for the other industries that Michigan is trying to entice. And what Michigan needs most is jobs!

I can guarantee that I will leave Michigan if the incentives are reduced to the point that the expected influx of film productions dries up. Why should I stay? I have no interest in working in any of the other "growth" industries that Michigan is courting, but which haven't yet supplied many new jobs. The one industry that immediately started bringing jobs into our state will be gone. I thought the goal was to attract jobs -- not scare them away. Now, as many Michiganders get a foot in the door, please don't slam the door on our ankles! Please give us the MEDC's "Upper Hand" -- not a slap in the face! Thank you.